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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6670
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 6954
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0552
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0388
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 1005

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 000291

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STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2016

TAGS: PGOV PREL NI

SUBJECT: ONITSHA UNREST: RED CROSS REPORTING THOUSANDS
DISPLACED

REF: LAGOS 289 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Classified by Acting Pol/Econ Chief Shannon Ross for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Following three days with no reports of violence in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigerian Red Cross reported three Hausa Muslims and one Igbo man were killed in a skirmish outside a hotel on February 25. A police officer escorting Hausas from the hotel allegedly shot and killed an Igbo man approaching his group. The Ibos retaliated by killing the police officer and two other Hausas.

¶2. (SBU) Anambra Governor Ngige's Special Media Assistant Fred Chukwuemobe told us approximately 10,000 Hausas remain in refuge in army barracks in Onitsha, fearing retribution by Ibos. Press reports similar numbers displaced. Anambra State government is paying roughly naira 4.5 million (USD 34,615) per day to feed displaced Muslims at the Ontisha camp, he said. Chukwuemobe said Governor Ngige plans to visit Abuja tomorrow to speak with President Obasanjo, and request federal government assistance in preventing further escalation of tensions in Anambra.

¶3. (SBU) Red Cross reported no new violence in Enugu, Enugu State and Mina, Niger State. Red Cross Disaster Management Officer Adeyemo Andronitus said approximately 2,000 Ibos remain in refuge in army barracks in Kontagora, Niger State.

¶4. (C) Comment: The immediate spark for recent violence in Onitsha appears to have been the return of bodies of Igbo traders, natives of Onitsha, killed in riots in the north of the country. The initial impetus for killings in the north was apparently anger over the proposed Presidential third term. The violence may be building into a cycle of sectarian killing and retribution in cities throughout Nigeria. With thousands reported displaced and fearing for their lives, the situation bears careful watching. End comment.

¶5. This cable was cleared by Embassy Abuja.

HOWE